INTERVIEW IV

DATE: July 29, 1988

INTERVIEWEE: HORACE BUSBY

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Kozy Korner Cafe, Washington, D.C.

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B: At the time of the first primary's results--I have no recollection at all of the number of votes cast in the first primary or the percentage distribution, except that Coke Stevenson's people, of course, came forward--[they] didn't advance it in a greatly serious way, but they did advance the idea--"Why go to the expense of a second primary when it is so obvious that Coke is going to win?" because of the vote that had gone to George E. B. Peddy. Peddy was a godsend for the Johnson people, just from being there.

G: Why is that?

B: Well, in a two-way race Johnson would not have. . . . The Peddy votes went back to some kind of a loyalty to the Fergusons and involved [the fact that] he had been a minister to someplace before we had so many ambassadors. He was a man with a world view. Modest sort of fellow and such reputation as he had was mostly as a member of the bar. He's a good man worth looking into although he played a very minor part in things. He did have enough reputation, enough integrity and ability to where when he announced and when he carried through with his campaign or--remember, this whole thing was heavily influenced by the short time span between the end of World War II and this campaign.

Peddy was anti-isolation and that was more of a force than really you allowed for. Peddy, of course, I don't recall specifically whether he endorsed Johnson or not. I tend to think he did. But I also think that he probably had--he was a conservative man and some of his Houston friends and clientele would probably have told him, "Don't demean yourself by running over and endorsing Johnson." All that Johnson was interested in was that he not endorse Coke, which he wasn't going to do. Again, he wasn't going to endorse Coke, primarily because of the isolation thing--not isolation but the "no horizon" type thing--and that's all that the Johnson forces wanted.

Johnson himself had known Peddy in some way somewhere back down the--not well, but he had crossed trails with him, had a great deal of respect for him. During this period of three of four days after the primary, he spoke very respectfully of him. (Laughter) I don't know if you know I was from North Texas, from Fort Worth and Dallas. The people who knew George Peddy were Houstonians primarily, I guess. I never had heard of the man until he came in, and the way there for three or four days there everybody was talking about, "Oh yes, fine old George Peddy." I thought I'd somehow been left out of a major portion of Texas history. But he was connected; he may have been a part of one of the administrations of the Fergusons or something like that. But anyway he was critical in the sense that he did not try to help Coke and he didn't--I can't say this but if he did endorse Mr. Johnson it was late.

The interesting thing about the second primary was, the first primary had been the helicopter campaign, statewide, out in villages and byways. The first primary had been run

to the standard prescribed by all Texas political campaigns for governor for years, in that you went to the same places candidates had been going to since before I was born, I guess, the railroad stops, that type thing, and I guess Johnson had gotten the maximum out of it. In the second primary, though, there were some departures. Well, considerable departures just in the concept of campaigning. In the second primary, first of all, Congress. . . . You see, at the 1948 Democratic National Committee [Convention] Truman in his aggressive, feisty acceptance speech said that he was going to [be] tarring and feathering the Republican Congress and that, by damn, he was going to call them back in session and stick it to them. When I heard that on the radio, Truman's acceptance speech--I think we were in Tyler that night, something like that--and my heart sank.

G: Is that right?

B: Well, he called the special session of Congress for a time right there in the middle of August. At the time my reaction was that it was going to take up the whole second primary, the special session, and it didn't. I don't remember why it didn't, but at any rate, to me being so new and young at the thing, you know, obviously Johnson had a good bit to do in Texas without coming up here. As it turned out, it was one of life's first and great lessons about politics. The fact that things shifted to Washington really made action to switch more, much, much more of the spotlight on Johnson, as a man apart, who already knew his way around up here and all like that.

In 1946, when he had run in the congressional race in Austin, for what turned out to be the last time, he had just driven his own supporters in the Tenth District to the edge

because he seemed not to be interested in coming back to campaign. He was so busy up here and he just would not even--to newspaper editors, reporters, he wouldn't talk about coming back, I mean, "My work is here." This was 1946 and it had a funny effect, that campaign did. Now I'm back to the Tenth District congressional campaign in 1946. At the start of that campaign season in which the establishment in Austin put up Colonel Hardy Hollers--who I saw the other day in ***U.S. News*** [***and World Report***] had just died recently--Johnson was a defeated candidate. Everything was wrong. This was typical all across the country with the congressmen in the House who had played a large part of World War II affairs or in the New Deal. You know, Johnson always said that the two members of Congress that year who were closest to Roosevelt were himself in Texas and Jerry Voorhis from California. Well, he was closer to Roosevelt by a long shot than Jerry Voorhis. Jerry Voorhis was beaten by Richard Nixon. He was the proponent of co-ops and all like this. And Johnson--that's what they were trying to do to Johnson with the Hollers thing.

I wasn't even in the news room yet. I had worked downtown at some other job and was interested in this Johnson phenomenon, and knew nothing about Johnson. It fascinated me how as the primary approached, the only primary, in 1946, everybody's song, everybody's tune changed. They had been dumping on Lyndon; you couldn't ride in a taxicab, you couldn't stop in a Drag [Guadalupe Street] store without the proprietor just giving you a ten-minute lecture on what was wrong with Lyndon Johnson. And he wouldn't pay attention to his own race. Three weeks or so before the election people

were saying, "What's the matter? Why doesn't he come down here and run? He's going to get beat." And that's what they had wanted up until they saw there was a possibility. So he went through his celebrated act of getting Gene Autry or somebody and getting all the crowds and humiliating Hollers by winning--the fraction seventy-two point something or seventy-three point something was very important to Johnson because he wanted to win by 75 per cent. It was like he had been defeated, that he was like two and a half points away from 75 per cent.

Well, in the second primary in 1948, everybody was feeling their way, but he had pretty good instinct that he wasn't going to lose anything by being up here; that he was going to get a lot more exposure, which at that point was all through the printed media, and [that] he was going to energize his own people because he couldn't be there. So he was quite willing to come and it did work positively in that way on his side. But it worked another way: Stevenson could not resist somebody's advice to be real smart. Since he was so far ahead in the first primary and shouldn't really be having to be bothered with this second primary because it was known that he was going to win, he came up to Washington to look it over and to talk around with important people as the next senator from Texas. I think maybe Will Clayton of Houston saw him, which we didn't take as any adversarial thing, thought it was appropriate, although Clayton was from the world in Houston that would not have been for Johnson. Johnson thought Clayton was really for him although there was too big a gulf for him ever to have approached Clayton.

So Coke comes up to Washington, which he knows nothing about, and he fell into a trap of having a press conference. Now these were all his own traps. We were not having anything to do with it--there were people in and around the Johnson campaign, the only one I identified with it myself from what I saw was Bob Clark, Tom Clark's brother. They picked up on the fact that Stevenson had the support of labor, organized labor, in the first primary and there were a couple of people with the CIO. Now, they weren't the AFL-CIO then, it was two separate operations. There were some CIO people who were hostile to Johnson. They were liberals--well, all the labor people were being hostile to him because of his Taft-Hartley vote. So he, Clark, started a backfire--he didn't start it; he brought it together--in which some of the strongest anti-labor people--when you say anti-labor, what they were for, in the overall, was to keep Texas from becoming a unionized state. They were naturally Coke Stevenson's supporters but he gave great offense by trying to play footsie with the railroad brotherhood [Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen].

Now, that was usually kind of a safe thing for a Texas conservative to do. As far as that's concerned, the AFL was conservative and they didn't like Lyndon for a bunch of other reasons, not just Taft-Hartley, and the CIO didn't like him because of Taft-Hartley. So, the anti-labor or Coke Stevenson as the pro-labor choice flared up very quickly at the beginning of the second primary as something lots of people were talking about. As I saw it from not much exposure to it, the particular world I was looking at, the issue was really not so much the labor issue as such, it was somehow an issue that affected the men up at the top of what we would now call the Texas Establishment, something that was far better

defined then than it is now. Stevenson, having taken the labor support, told them not that he was expedient, not that he was blind or anything like that, but here is a guy that's just not our kind of fellow. He doesn't know where he stands and he'll do most anything to get elected and we don't know what we've got if we get him elected.

That was an attitude that was developing and I think younger people in the political structure were probably laughing at him, at Stevenson. That was my impression of him: here was this old guy who had been governor and everybody knew he was as conservative as they come, and here he comes running out and he's the hot-shot choice of organized labor; it was kind of ludicrous. It was to me and it still is ludicrous that he thought that was going to get him anything. The main thing was that I doubt very seriously that those endorsements in Austin by the railroad brotherhood and the AFL--the CIO wasn't quartered in Austin then; it was in Dallas, I think--those were the kind of things that a lieutenant governor, which Stevenson had been, usually could be counted on to--he was critical to labor and trying to stop things. So they tried to make the Lieutenant Governor into a friend, enough of a friend to where when they really had to have him, he would help them defeat something that was real bad anti-labor. And the anti-labor bills had come up in the 1947 Texas Legislature: the right to work and several other things like that.

So it's all blended together. Stevenson gets off up in Washington has the press conference in his hotel. And there is on the front page of the ***Austin American*** or the ***Austin Statesman***, the day after he was here, a story about four inches long--five inches

long at the most--by Leslie Carpenter--by-line by him--and it was just dialogue. It was an inspired way to write the story.

Marshall McNeil of Scripps-Howard started this little press conference off by asking him why had he changed his position on Taft-Hartley--something like that--and he fumbled with the answer. Then Carpenter asked him something else about "You changed sides on labor," or something like that. So Stevenson got very indignant and said, "You get me off up here away from my notes. . . ." In effect, "I don't know what my position is." He went on two or three more lines there and he was mad at them for asking him about this and then he couldn't answer; he really couldn't answer. He did not know how he should answer, which again surprises me because you'd think he would know something better than that. Well, instead of this being a story in the Austin paper, it was a story all over Texas. But the Leslie Carpenter five-inch story, we reproduced it--

G: Is that right?

B: --and sent it out to the field. And during the second primary, they kept calling in for more copies. It really became widely read and it was a fascinating thing to me because people read it and they may or may not have reacted to Coke Stevenson on labor--some of them did, I suppose, but not a great many--but this, "What a weak fellow, what the hell is he doing playing footsie with labor when that's not where he ought to be?" It just wiped that issue out all the way around. And as I said, Stevenson also made what is--you learn as you go through politics--really a critical mistake: don't do something like come to Washington before you're elected, when Washington is not your strength. It was strong

for Johnson to come to Washington. It was bad[ly] wrong for Stevenson to come to Washington. So Johnson came up here and I don't know whether he voted on something or not. You have to keep in mind that this is all in the context of a worsening situation in Europe, the Berlin blockade. As all the polls showed in that period and earlier and later too, most Americans thought we were going to be in a war in five years--within at most five years. What Johnson was up here doing in Congress, no matter what it was, seemed to be far closer to the center of things than anything Stevenson knew to do or was doing.

So then he [LBJ] came back. I don't remember how he got himself away from up here. Johnson was very good at--like in the 1946 campaign, before he came back to Texas for his celebrated whirlwind finish, he got letters or assurances or notes or something from the Speaker, from the Chairman of his committee, Carl Vinson, all that sort of thing, to say that yes, he could take seven or eight days off because they weren't planning to have any major votes during that period. And he came back to Texas. I'm sure he came back--he had to come back before Congress recessed. I'm sure they met for thirty days. But it was with all this usual Johnsonian caution that nothing big was going to come up and he would come back to Washington if it were big. So he came back.

G: He did give a speech while he was up there calling for a bipartisan commission on inflation. Do you remember that? Is that significant?

B: No, I had not started doing anything on his speeches and I suppose that one was written up here; I don't remember it even.

But he came back to Texas. Where a significant change came in, the significance of which was probably not apparent even to the people who were doing this strategy for the campaign, instead of again setting out to go the county-seat route, which was about the only thing Texas politicians knew, the second primary--because time was such a tremendous factor--began with a concentration on the big cities, after he had been up here. You had kind of a first--I remember particularly at Dallas, we went to Irving and some other places like this. It was tacit acknowledgment of suburbs before we had called them suburbs.

Now, this ceases to be chronological. To start the second primary, he went to a little town called Center in East Texas where, as I recall, this woman who was sort of a--there were several women in Texas who had been the principal opposition to Coke Stevenson, Minnie Fischer Cunningham and some other woman and somehow they figured in this; I couldn't tell you how. But we went into the Ferguson country, who were Jim Ferguson loyalists--deep East Texas, piney woods Texas, which was not Johnson country. And in the first primary--several times over there I experienced this; it was entirely novel to me. We were in the--oh, I know the place: Rusk. Is there a town of Rusk? There is a Rusk County. Anyway, there's Henderson, county seat of Rusk, I guess. An old, old, old man with gnarled fingers and all that came up and he first asked me and I was standing next to the Congressman, who was shaking hands with people and the Congressman saw him. His instincts told him more what was going on than I knew because I didn't know this. And the old fellow fished out of his shirt pocket what turned

out to be a letter, a piece of paper that had been folded and folded and folded until it was about an inch square. He unfolded it and then he couldn't read. He asked me to read it to him. He said, "I know what it says because people have read it to me before." It was a letter from Ma Ferguson saying Lyndon Johnson is a man you can trust. Now, when it was written--it was so old and crumpled up I don't think it was written in 1948. I think it may have been written in 1941, but it was. . . .

These Ferguson people were the first kind of people I had ever seen for whom the past has such a hold on them. Johnson knew instinctively that they were all over East Texas, so he started his campaign at Center maybe on a Saturday night, open air thing. Center was a stop on the railroad, I guess. I don't know whether it was the Missouri-Pacific--I guess it was the Missouri-Pacific [Southern Pacific] that went up through East Texas from Houston and Galveston. And it was at Center that the train conductors had always called out the next four stops on the local, "Tenaha, Timpson, Bobo and Blair," a call that has lived on through time immemorial in the crap-shooting games in Texas. You would still hear it: "Tenaha, Timpson, Bobo and Blair." Those are the next four stops beyond Center which I didn't know anything about when we went over there.

There was for me a very small comedy in that I took advantage of the situation. Everybody was seated and always at every stop you had the press wanting to know how big the crowd was, and these little towns didn't have anybody who knew. So, by George, I went around and I counted every soul there and the ***Dallas*** [***Morning***] ***News*** asked me

and, one by one, all the guys asked me. They were all friends of mine from the press. What I said, and I told them this exact count, and damned if they wrote this in the paper on Sunday morning that "Horace Busby, Johnson's campaign aide" or something of that sort, "said that there were 425 people present. However, the local chief of police said it was closer to a thousand." When I went in to see the Congressman the next morning he was in bed and he had that ***Dallas News*** folded up waiting for me and he said, "I don't know whether I can survive you or not." But, you see, that was a weekend. That was a Saturday and we did a little bit of campaigning in some small towns and then--

G: There is a list of them. There's Center.

B: I didn't say all that. Oh, oh, that's yours. The dice call is Tenaha, Timpson, Bobo and Blair, and those are big places, Henderson and Kilgore. The thing I remember about this was that nobody asked me, nobody asked my permission to do this to me or nothing like that. Where in the first primary, Woody had traveled with him and I was out on the road being the press man and I was at all the stops, but you had other people taking care of this man. In the second primary, here's old Buzz, just beat, and either Mary Rather or Dorothy Nichols or somebody like that. It took me a few days to realize what had happened to me but here I was on the airplanes with him, and the funny thing about it was we just got along fine.

G: Is that right?

B: We never fell off into a spat. He never raised his voice at me and he usually was pretty tempestuous and stormy, but he wasn't.

G: Was he optimistic during that campaign?

B: Well--I don't know--he kept saying that the most optimistic man in any campaign has to be the candidate. Nobody is going to be more optimistic than he is. Which I took to mean he wasn't very optimistic.

At some point I left Austin with him, going to El Paso. We flew to Love Field in Dallas. This has been written about, like in the ***Saturday Evening Post*** story. There was a bank of five or six pay telephones in that airport and I went over to try--we handled airline reservations and all differently then than you do now. I was over making sure we got on the plane to El Paso. Then I went out looking for him and he was in one of these phone booths. I noticed in a moment that all the doors were open to other booths. There were two or three people standing outside these empty booths and every single telephone was dangling, the voice piece was dangling. He had calls working on all those phones.

G: Is that right?

B: Can you [imagine]? These people standing around saying, "Who does he think he is?" And I sort of wanted them not to know I had anything to do with him. He was stage-managing the whole outfit. Some woman stepped into one of the booths. "Wait, whoa"--

G: That was great.

(Laughter)

B: --"you got a long distance call there." You know, long distance calls were much more impressive than they are now. All the calls were to Washington.

We went to El Paso and stayed at that--whatever the big hotel at that time was; I don't remember it by name. But they had sent up fruit and I wrote my first note forging his handwriting, thanking the manager for sending up the fruit. I felt pretty big about doing that.

So we had to leave the next morning to go to an early morning rally in Odessa, and the plane we were going on from El Paso--which I have no idea what the carrier was; it was not a mainline carrier--the plane left El Paso at some ungodly hour like five-thirty or something. There is a time zone change. It meant that we needed to be up and at 'em by four-thirty. He told me he wanted a cup of coffee and a sweet roll, a danish, and I checked with the hotel and no, their room service wasn't working then. So I went down and talked to the bell captain and all like this. He took me down the street and there was an all-night coffee and donut shop, and I did a dry run or two. I timed it and I set an alarm clock and I called the operator and I did everything to get up. At that stage in my life the single most difficult thing for me to do was to wake up. I could sleep through anything. But I did all this so I could go down there at four o'clock in the morning, get his coffee and sweet roll--because this was the first time I had been thrown to the wolves--and come back and wake him up and everything would be all right. So, I go to bed, pins and needles about getting up on time. I never did really know what happened because the next thing I knew after going to sleep, I'm being shaken awake and here he is setting on the other twin bed--it wasn't in his room--with a half twist back on his head and he said, "Here, I got you a cup of coffee and a nice sweet roll." He had gone down to the place. I

kind of got up and was fumbling and he said, "Eat it," and so there I sat on the edge of the bed eating the donut and drinking the coffee, with him watching and not saying anything. And I wouldn't say anything to him. But anyway, we made it to Odessa and back.

From that point forward though--that was all on a commercial airline--we had planes.

G: Were they private planes?

B: Yes. They weren't much, but--

G: Were they Wesley West's or--?

B: No. I don't think Wesley West's plane ever came along--once or twice. . . . The people whose planes they were were not necessarily people who were for him and were not people who were around him any. But some lawyer would call and say, "He needs a plane and you've got a"--I guess the best plane going at that point was the DC-3--there weren't Convairs. And we flew around.

In the last ten days of that campaign, I can't tell you where we were or when we were there, but we were in the big cities of Texas and nearly all together. The thing that runs along with all this--you're out on the road and you are going from city to city and instead of that being confusing--well, you're constantly seeing a new set of faces because you've just left one town and you're two hundred miles away--the people nonetheless meld together because when you're seeing them, if you're in the campaign, their focus in both cities or all five cities, whatever, they're all focused on the same thing, which is the candidate and the campaign. So it's not like you had a bunch of strangers around. The

interesting thing was that in that period, and this--anybody that was using what I'm saying should get a time-line thing about developments in Europe, not just coinciding with these dates but leading into it and then during these dates, because I tell you, you could just feel it as well as see it. Our audience changed; it had done this just a little bit at the end of the first primary, but it really became pronounced in the second primary. We weren't seeing old politicos or anything of that sort. What we were seeing were the young war veterans and their wives and the baby boom in their arms. They were coming out and they had just said, "This war we've just been through is because of men like Coke Stevenson"--

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--"who were primitive and insular men, and that's not what we want." Well, you know, Johnson had to make up like, what was it, 72,000 votes? I think it was 72,000. That's where those votes came from.

G: I want to ask you about the black vote.

B: It was insignificant.

G: But my impression is that LBJ did roll up big majorities in the black districts in Houston, for example, that people like Mack Hannah were--

B: Let's keep this in perspective. In 1944, the blacks won the right to vote on a Texas case, the right to vote in a Democratic primary, because it was a de facto election. The election decision came down too late for it to matter, as I recall. In 1946 when blacks in Austin voted for the first time in the primary, they voted strongly for Johnson. But I don't really think--now, I wasn't around so I don't know this--I don't really think that the votes were

so numerous. They weren't just a handful by any means. Adam Clayton Powell came to Austin in 1946, stayed at the home of the dentist, Dr.--was it Givens?

G: Everett Givens, yes.

B: What was the name of the man in the white primary suit?

G: Lonnie Smith.

B: Is that who it was?

G: Yes. Houston.

B: I thought it was something like Givens. Well anyway, Adam Clayton Powell, entirely on his own--nobody--Johnson didn't know he was coming; he came down there in 1946, stayed there for three or four days, met with black leaders in Dr. Given's home. Johnson had told me what he said. Then later on, way long years later, I talked to Powell, whom I loved to talk to about it. He said he went down there and told these blacks in Austin, he said, "Johnson is not a hater."

It's interesting, I had occasion just recently to--well, I guess I was trying to tell Bob Dallek about the importance of this word, "hater." Johnson used it all the time meaning haters of Roosevelt. All the Roosevelt men used "hater" a lot. And blacks used it in terms of white feelings for them. So Powell went down there and they said, "Well, how do you know?" Because some of them, like Dr. Givens, they had some relationships with Johnson, but they didn't know much about him; [they were] not politically very sophisticated. And some of them probably didn't like him. I don't remember--well, I

wouldn't have known. And Powell said, "I've been there." He said, "I've watched." And when you have the little Congressman from Mississippi, John--who was it?

G: Rankin.

B: Rankin. When you have John Rankin and there were two or three others, the real demagogues. When they're up there running on against blacks, "Send them back to the trees," that kind of stuff, there will be a certain number of southerners, including some of pretty good reputation, who would stay on the floor. Johnson would--as Powell told me, he said, "This is my test because I watched him." He said, "When they get off into that kind of stuff, he gets up and leaves; he will not sit through it." And he said, "That tells me all I want to know."

So in 1948--in 1946, incidentally, [my] first year out of college, I worked in Homer Rainey's campaign. I was real ticked off in that campaign because he--well, D. B. Hardeman put me in their garage that was rented downtown. He and the other people left and he gave me some money and said there is a fellow coming by for it in a little while. I don't remember the instructions about amount. I think I had more money than I was supposed to give away. I didn't know what to expect. Pretty soon, here comes one of the local Uncle Toms, "Massa," bowing, clasping his hands, and pulling all this stuff and he needs a little traveling around--not traveling money, but getting around money, and all like this. I started asking him some questions; what was he going to do with it, this black man? Well, the reason he was getting this money was to keep blacks from showing up at Rainey's speeches, and I wouldn't give him the money. I said, "They are going to have to

find themselves another boy to do this." The truth was, in that campaign, Beauford Jester, who was a totally serene patrician, when he made his own kickoff speech in Corsicana--open air speech--he bussed in three or four busloads of blacks. It didn't worry him at all, and here we were, the big liberals, passing out money telling them to keep blacks out of sight. It was a clear threat that if they didn't get any money, well, there might be some blacks show up. I didn't like that.

Incidentally, I want to tell you, I sent out a mailing within the last two weeks of the various editorials and op-ed pieces and ***New Republic*** and ***Atlantic Monthly*** things that have been written about me recently to my subscribers, or the people receiving the ***Busby Papers***. I got a letter from Alex Louis--he's always wanted me to write a book or something. He writes these little four-sentence letters; I guess he's eighty years old or so now. So I got the letter from him and the next day I got a phone call from him. Alex has--like a child's funny box, it gets turned over and you can't stop laughing. So he and his wife both knew me in 1946, but this was before she was his wife. And Alex called and he said, "Clifford and I were reading this. You know, you're pretty smart about politics. I got to thinking about this and I haven't been able to stop and [Clifford]"--that's his wife; sounds like it's his brother, but it's his wife. He said, "Clifford said that I had to call you and tell you this because you might never know it if I didn't." "In 1946," he said, "D. B. [Hardeman] and I"--he was D. B.'s counselor; he tried to keep him off the bottle. They had been in school together. He said that he and D. B. had come out to the ***Daily Texan*** before my term ended and had offered me a job with the campaign as soon as I got out of

school. And so I reported for work downtown, and he said that I had been around for about a week and they hadn't--if I came in and said, "What can I do?" well, they'd quickly say, "You can do this or you can do that." Finally, he said that this was what he had called to tell me: that he and D. B. had said, "We've had Buzz around here now for a week or ten days or something and haven't paid a bit of attention to him." Alex said, "Well, why don't we take him to dinner tonight and kind of draw him into things?"

I remember this evening very, very well. It was a big event for me. We went over to the Spanish Village that used to be on Red River, a little north and east of the Capitol. We went over there and I was impressed because D. B. brought along a bottle. I don't know if that was legal or not even, but he brought along a bottle which I didn't drink. I was really with the heavies here. D. B. had managed one or two campaigns before the war. He managed Gerald Mann in 1941 against Johnson and he and Johnson never really did get along too well. But anyway, Alex said, "We were there with you and D. B. finally brought up the subject of something about the campaign. You said, 'Well, yes, D. B., what's wrong with the way its going now is the following. . .and what you ought to do is this. . . .'" And he said, "I brought up something. You said, 'Well, that's right, but you should be doing it this way,' and outlined it in detail and apparently off the top of your head. D. B. and I kept looking at each other. The thing is that the things you were saying were really pretty good. We hadn't thought of it."

So, after several hours, two or three hours, they drove me home to this rooming house out at the university where I lived. I got out and he said they started off down the

street and they got about a block, two blocks away and D. B. stopped. He said, "What have we got here?" He [Alex] said, "You changed the whole strategy of the campaign." Alex was so amused he couldn't talk coherently. Both of them were out to humor me and instead got into this sort of thing. He said, "From then on during the campaign, D. B. was almost afraid to bring you in."

Just before the first primary, D. B. announced there would be a run-off so they were going to save their money for the run-off. I went in and gave him my own little lecture, saying "That's very bad strategy; you shouldn't let the momentum wane." Six weeks later that was the consensus in the press, that they had pulled their money back and screwed up. Anyway, that was a funny digression, but of course the end of the campaign, the vote--the close vote business and all like that. I think I've talked about that somewhere else. It's been talked about enough.

G: Were you there during that period? Were you at the Johnsons' house, Dillman Street or--?

B: No, no. I had an apartment that they had gotten for me.

G: Where did the people gather during that? Were they down at the headquarters or--?

B: You had the old house. What was it, the Albert Sidney Burleson house at the corner of Eighth and--was it Rio Grande, Lamar, what? Well, you know where the campaign headquarters was. That was somebody's historic house; I think it had to be Albert Sydney Burleson. Sometimes you met there. Then after you got into all this vote business, I think most of the meetings during the fall were out at Dillman.

G: Did you spend much time out there? I mean, were you involved in the--?

B: I went wherever things were going on because that was the nature of what I was into. Most of my time was spent with him. He had me around him. The campaign people were around Connally who was very often not where Johnson was.

G: Was there a conscious strategy to hold back the reporting of your votes until--?

B: Let me tell you this. This is what I thought I had gone over once. What happened was that in 1941 when the election had concluded, John Connally, who was then--whatever he was, thirty, no, not thirty--in his twenties, was the designated campaign manager for that special election campaign. So they were winning and they'd come from way back and Johnson kept prodding him. John kept calling around the state to their different managers and friends saying, "Get your vote in. Run it up." George Parr, a law to himself, kept telling them when they'd call him, "Look, you're children; you don't know what you're doing. You're going to get all your votes in and then they're going to stop counting in their counties and after you've gotten all your votes out on the table they'll come in with however many votes it takes to beat you." So kind of a typical Johnsonian trait to be innocent and naive. He hated to think there were evil people in the world. He really did. It was painful, at many, many different levels, how he just would not allow for anybody telling him that there were people who were less than Sunday-school pure. He just was very offended by this cynical attitude on the part of George Parr. So they got their votes in and he got screwed out of the Senate because they just changed all the Martin Dies votes in Martin Dies' home district to Coke Stevenson.

Martin Dies was a very popular figure in his home district. He was one of the three or four most prominent members of Congress. A powerful orator, he had been set upon enough by his adversaries to where the district was very strong for him--was just winning the district hands down, when suddenly they stopped counting the votes. These old voting judges said--and I remember reading in the paper--"I can't get these votes counted. The cows have got to be milked." And they milked cows like crazy in East Texas until Wednesday or Thursday. They had all the Johnson votes in and so then they beat him by a thousand votes.

In 1948, to put it succinctly from what I know, at seven o'clock when the polls closed, we began to get these early returns. At that time you could release returns during the day. The ***Houston Chronicle*** under Jesse Jones always seemed to get the first released votes and put it on the wire early in the morning. That would make the headlines all over the state on Saturday afternoon of the voting. The early headlines that day had been "Houston Going by a Landslide for Stevenson," which it didn't. But at seven o'clock at night within a very short time span, the Texas Election Bureau returns were coming in. I suppose they were principally Houston returns, I don't know, but it was pretty decisive against Johnson. I went on a date actually with Mary V. to the Night Hawk. Just sat up at the counter and had a "Frisco." They had the radio on there and she was talking to me, "Well, what do you think you will do now?"

I wasn't really expecting to pull it out. Rationally and logically there seemed to be no way to pull it out. Seeing what I had seen that I've already spoken of, the change in

people made you think there is something happening. But 72,000 votes was an awful lot of votes. I forget exactly what happened. I think I was driving her home between nine and ten and there was a change. I don't have any memory and didn't really know then much about this: how the votes came in and how they were counted at the Texas Election Bureau, which was a thing that the newspapers in Texas had put together. Very honest-count outfit; nobody disputed it.

Sometime after nine o'clock at night the vote began to perform untypically in that after Johnson had been hopelessly out of the running in the early going, he suddenly was moving up. Which was a pattern you didn't normally get. It seems to me that between ten and eleven, oh, it was a horse race. It was close.

Johnson had gone from San Antonio that morning, John Connally driving, and he went to Johnson City, voted and came home [at] four or five o'clock in the afternoon. He told somebody, "I'm going to bed and don't wake me unless it's time to make a statement of some kind," or maybe make a concession statement. I don't think he said that.

G: So, he was not optimistic at this point?

B: No, he gave up. I was with him when he heard those first ***Houston Chronicle*** headlines. He said in San Antonio, "We just didn't make it." He called a couple of his San Antonio people to prod them about getting the vote out. The thing in San Antonio was that in that early morning on Saturday, the vote wasn't coming out. It did before the day was over but it didn't start up that morning. I guess they had to work it or something, I don't know.

G: Who did he call? Do you recall?

B: Oh, Jimmy Knight, who was a county commissioner. One of John's friends from--in the boss-ridden politics of San Antonio, Jimmy Knight was kind of an up-there guy. He had intelligence, college education. I don't know anything else about him. I liked him very much. Anyway that's what he had reacted to that day. I didn't go to Johnson City with him. No, I guess I did. I was driving Bo Byers and we started out to Johnson City, and we got on the wrong road and never came anywhere near it. I ended up back in Austin and did this early evening bit. After it began to turn around--not turn around but after it began to close, I felt that something significant was happening. I took Mary V. back to her apartment and I went down to the headquarters. There was only one of the top echelon of the campaign, Charlie Herring; well, no, there may have been two or three others upstairs, I'm not sure. Charlie Herring was also a delightful person--is he still living? He was moving around. He had a big twinkle in his eye which might mean he was up to something of low order or a high order of mischief. I just observed from my office down on the first floor that the woman at the switchboard, Sarah Wade, was talking to Charlie a lot. And Charlie was going away and coming back and talking to Sarah. So I've always been one to--I can't survive unless I know, if there's a secret, at least what the secret is about.

I had some idea that there was a little secret floating around here. So I went out and stood around Sarah looking innocent and sweet, you know, little boy lost. Before long when there wasn't anybody looking she started telling me what was going on, which was that a long distance operator at the Southwestern Bell office in Austin had gotten off

her shift at eleven o'clock. She was strong for Johnson. She was strong for Charlie Herring--I don't know what her connection was with Herring--but anyway, she called over there for Herring and she said that she wanted to tell him what was happening; that in the last half hour to forty-five minutes she was handling the long distance calls from Stevenson's headquarters which was being run by his brother, whose name I don't remember, and she gave him where the calls were going: Eastland County, a very select group of counties, for which there was some explanation. The counties were not contiguous, but people who knew state politics, state affairs in that day could look at it, as I later heard some of them doing, and tell you what the common denominator was that had them calling those counties: it's where they could trust whatever the apparatus was that was counting votes. And she said they were telling them, "Don't bring in the votes. Don't count all your votes." And she, according to Sarah or Charlie, said, "You know as well as I do what that means." So Charlie had called Connally, I think, or maybe, well probably, [Tom] Moore. Before very long here comes all the muckety-mucks in. I also heard that Johnson was up.

G: He had been asleep, is that right?

B: Yes. Sure. Like I said, he went on, went to sleep and said, "It's all over." He'd given an advance interview to the press that was traveling with him in San Antonio about his going into radio. That was their Monday morning story. When I heard he was up I thought there must be something here.

What was going on with us was they recognized the pattern of 1941 all over again. I didn't have any frame of reference, but the Stevenson people, what they were doing--they weren't calling out saying, "Switch the votes," they were saying, "Hold them."

So, we--our side, not me--began to make calls. I was impressed when I found out who they were calling, because most of the guys were local, maybe a county attorney or a district attorney or something, but guys I had met during the campaign. I was impressed when this moment came, that nearly everybody that they were calling up was really, I thought, a pretty good guy, a pretty bright, able fellow.

So, what happened was that our people, the Johnson people, began to show up at these courthouses where the votes were coming in. "Why isn't the count continuing here?" or something. I cannot tell you whether there was any low level court action or threat of court action, injunctions or whatever. That could have been different in each locale and you would never have heard about [it]. No big action was filed, but the fact that there were--I think that the term that was being used was watchers. You'd have first one Johnson man to show up at the courthouse and then before long the first man's wife had gotten in touch with the second man's wife. The second man's wife had found the second man and he'd gotten the third man. Before long there would be four or five Johnson people and not just guys off the street; smart lawyers, who were possibly as smart or smarter than these poor guys on the. . .the county judges. That is not when and where the jousting went back and forth about the votes but that's when they were stopped. They were not stopped from stopping the vote counts. You couldn't stop them, but from that

point on they knew they were being watched. My impression was that some of the counties, probably a majority of the commissioners courts or whoever was responsible, they wanted nothing to do with anything under the counter which they smelled coming. So they just went in and slipped their votes in. Other places they didn't.

G: How many counties were involved? A dozen maybe?

B: No. I think it was more than that, up closer to twenty. Some of them were counties like Galveston County, which was notorious for its ties to the state ruling administration in Austin because of gambling and all like that. None of them were major population centers. I never did know; I didn't need to know. I just knew how it was playing.

Then that began the week which was very closely repetitious of 1941, in some respects. Of course, the ultimate eighty-seven vote count had no relationship to anything. Partly, it was a freak of the way the Democratic convention became the arbiter of who had won.

There were things there, like Jack County. It became crucial to the Johnson cause to ride herd on every single county report. So the Jack County certificate was opened at the state convention in Fort Worth and somebody had the vote count in Jack County. They looked at this certificate and the votes had been entered on the certificate in reverse. Instead of Johnson carrying Jack County, he had lost it, but he had been given--I mean the Stevenson's exact vote total was put under Johnson's name and Johnson's under Stevenson's. So Walter Jenkins, who was from that area, and two or three other people went charging up to Jack County to get it recertified.

Well, you had the old county judge up there who had made the mistake and there was no way under heaven that he was going to acknowledge that he had made a mistake. He was for Johnson; they told him how critical it was and all like this. He would die a tortured man before he would admit that change. There were several other things like this that happened all around.

The vote total just finally was making no sense at all. It did not relate to the actual outcome of the vote. Johnson would probably have won just on a straight error-free vote count by more than a thousand votes. As he said--and I told Dallek about this--[and] as was brought out in some speech that he made during this time: Johnson had no standing in court, even after Coke Stevenson went to that federal judge and got the injunction. There was never any point at which Johnson could get a court to intervene because he was the winner and he had no grievance. But if you went back through other actions in that election, where votes were thrown out in Galveston County and Brown County--that was Brown County; it was with another one that was big along with Eastland, and we had a good man there named J. Ed Johnson in Brown County, Brownwood. But if you had recounted the election after throwing out ballots that were found to be fraudulent ballots in contests at the commissioners court level or county judge level or something like that, where they were tombstone votes or something like this and courts threw them out, threw out the ballot, Johnson would have won by four or five thousand votes. The exclusion of the ballot was not a function of the Senate race and so there was no counting of that

ballot. The only way you could have gotten it to the state committee would have been for Coke Stevenson to demand that it be set and he wasn't going to do it.

G: He wanted a very selective look at the. . . .?

B: No, that's not what I'm saying. It's just that in the affair I've just recited, this was a result of the politics of other contested county-level offices. There was one place, and maybe it was Galveston, almost two thousand votes were thrown out. They're big on tombstone votes down there. All of those votes which had been presumably cast to keep somebody from winning a commissioner's court seat had all been marked for Stevenson, but that wasn't why they were being thrown out. They were being thrown out in this other race, in which I forget what the court declared. They had to have a new election. What I'm saying is there is no--that figure, eighty-seven, was arrived at in Fort Worth by the convention with all kinds of errors contributing to it. He had the Jack County episode and that was just one. I happened to be around when that was all transpiring. There were--oh, I don't know--twelve, thirteen, fourteen, maybe not that many, maybe nine or ten instances in which some way or other the vote that was entered in the journal of the convention was not the right vote.

G: What do you think happened in the Parr counties, the South Texas--?

B: Well, I think it's obvious that somebody wrote names in in Jim Wells County in the same hand and all like that. I never did speculate about it very much because it was so obvious to me, and to us, that votes were being moved around illegally in bigger numbers over on the Stevenson side.

G: Was there any contact between the Johnson Headquarters and, say, Ed Lloyd?

B: I don't think so. Later on in the year--you see, I was very new and first of all, I didn't know the George Parr territory. I didn't know about this side of Texas politics, not being from my part of the state. I had met George Parr once and scared him and he ran off and Johnson nearly chewed me out.

G: What do you mean?

B: Well, during the campaign, this little fellow with glasses, nice-looking, little, unassuming guy was in Johnson's suite. When I came in Johnson was still out shaking hands or something somewhere and I had James Lovell of the ***Dallas Times Herald*** with me. I came in and this guy said, this fellow of mine that didn't think I'd seen [?] and he said, "You're Busby, aren't you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I've seen you." And he had seen me somewhere. He had probably shadowed our campaign somewhere and watched and somebody said, "That little boy is Busby." And I said, "Oh, oh, yes; well, I want you to meet Jimmy Lovell here of the ***Dallas Times Herald***" And Parr, you know, ears perk up. And Lovell says, "Oh, George Parr, I have always wanted to meet you. I want to do an interview." He was gone.

G: Is that right? Did he just turn around and walk out the door?

B: I don't know how he got away, but Johnson came in expecting him to be there and bitched, bitched, bitched for the rest of the weekend about me having run him off. But he wasn't really mad. I don't think he wanted to see him. Ed Lloyd was a very--

G: What was the meeting about? Votes, or was it about money?

B: No, no, Parr didn't deal--you've got to understand in a situation like that, those bosses in Texas, as everywhere in the United States, they couldn't care less about who's United States senator or president. They want to know who is going to be county commissioner. It's very difficult for people to get this through their head, that the Senate race was way--almost at the bottom of George Parr's priorities. Not at the top. What he was doing in 1941 and what he was doing in 1948 was trying to keep Coke Stevenson and. . . . You see, Coke Stevenson was responsible for this thing that went on in 1941.

Tape 2 of 2, Side 1

G: Just as the tape stopped you were saying [in] 1941 he was interested in getting--

B: He had something involved with wanting a pardon; he had served time and all like that. He had known Lyndon Johnson since Johnson was Richard Kleberg's man. I don't know that he was so enamored of Johnson; I never thought he was, but he really didn't think Stevenson was--I don't know whether it was Stevenson or people around Stevenson, he really didn't like them. But he also felt and I think this was evident from stuff that I heard later on, he also felt that Johnson and these people were children: they didn't understand about these meanies, tough birds that they were. And the truth of it, I think he was right. So he went his own way.

In November after the general election, the Senate Rules Committee, which was still under Republican control--Senator [William] Jenner sent an investigator down to that district to pry around. What they were looking for was some basis to challenge the seating of Johnson. I went in to [see] the Congressman [LBJ] in the Federal Building in

Austin. I had an early edition of the afternoon ***Statesman*** that said that the investigator was going into Duval County and Jim Wells [County]. I took it in to him and he read it and called me in a good while later. He was standing at the window looking out and he said, "My blood runs cold." He said, "You've got a stranger down there. He's got a badge. He may have a gun," which is possible for the Senate investigator. And he said, "He may be dead by sunrise, and there's not a goddamn thing I can do about it." Which there wasn't. He couldn't call down there. There was not any way he could intervene, but he knew the dangers in that territory. He'd be out rotting to death on the King Ranch before they'd ever know it.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview IV.

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Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of

HORACE W. BUSBY

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Horace W. Busby, of Santa Monica, California, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of the personal interviews conducted with me on April 23, 1981; March 4, 1982; July 2, 1982; July 29, 1988; August 16, 1988; November 17, 1988; December 21, 1988; and April 2, 1989, in Washington, D.C., and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library..

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcripts shall be available for use by researchers as soon as they have been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

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Signed by Horace W. Busby, Jr., on May 7, 1999.

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